

The

scribes -

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THE WESLEYAN



VOLUME XX

No. 4

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SCRIBES' ISSUE

This is the Sribes' issue of The Wesleyan. And who are the Scribes? They are the wearers of the coveted "mingled yarn", the symbol of creativity, of imagination, and of inspiration. They are the would-be novelists, poets, and playwrights of our time. They are the students who groan long hours over uncooperative typewriters, heap trash cans high with cast-off masterpieces, and finally end up with "the most horrible thing I've ever written."

The Scribes Society is a continuation of the Wesleyan Writers Club, formed in 1920 by fourteen young hopefuls interested in writing. The name was later changed to Scribes and Pharisees, and finally, in 1931, became simply the Scribes. But the purpose of the club has stayed the same—to encourage attempts at creativeness that may someday grow into greatness.

Every year the Scribes are responsible for putting out the spring issue of The Wesleyan. This year the central theme is: I am a part of all that I've met.

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He Wooden Talk

By DONNIE DONALDSON

I guess I've always known him really, and yet the first time I ever met him face to face was one night he sent me in after Pa. He was standing outside like he always did and naturally he didn't turn his eyes when I went by.

Then one night the Dewey boys that live down by the schoolhouse got drunk and tried to get him in their truck. They swore the next day though he wouldn't budge—just stood there with that glassy stare coming out of that face and after awhile they gave up.

The little brats in town used to pick on him, I remember. They'd cross the street by Williams' Produce Store and throw rocks at him and Sammy Rather actually spit on him once. He took it like a man, too—I can truthfully say I never heard him say a word about it. Maybe he understood . . . He just stood there looking— at everybody, the whole town.

Grandpa used to say it was right funny the way he'd just rest himself on those two feet, listening and watching with nobody, not one soul, to get him to say a word. And little Billy James used to cry everytime his Ma brought him to town 'cause he "didn't like that big old brown man".

Ma used to say that they ought to take him away. Pa and I used to say why, he wasn't doing no harm and Ma would say no, but he wasn't doing no good. But I don't know, maybe he was doing some good. One of Pa's favorite stories was about the night when Junior Malone tried to break in Sid Perkin's store and had a run-in- with him. Judge Wilkins, coming back from the revival, saw Junior just as he slid out of the window and when Junior ran, he ran—right straight into *him*! Judge Wilkins said Junior didn't move again for an hour he got such a lick, and the next Monday night in town meeting the Judge said that the whole town ought to be proud of "our silent friend".

Aunt Junie said he'd been right there when she and her Pa and Ma came into town in their old buggy with all their belongings in the back—when there were only two stores in town, when the streets were just hard dirt and chickens used to roost in the church-house. He was there when the tornado came and the night McDougall's Hardware Store burned down, he stood in the dark with those flames playing crazy-like shadows across his face and not saying a word.

And the night my Brother Ben was born, Pa stuck a cigar in his old, gnarled hand and fractured three fingers when he slapped him on the back. On Saturday afternoons the country women used to hang their wares on him—like baskets of flowers and sacks of potatoes—prop up jars of cold buttermilk against his knotty old legs..

And every fourth of July somebody always stuck a flag in his hand and there he'd stand with that flag waving around. And funniest of all—one Christmas somebody glued a whole roll of cotton to his face and put a crocus sack with "Merry Christmas" in red letters on his back.

Yep, he saw the good and bad—and was a part of all of its from the time Old Ben set his smokin' store in the days of the hoop skirts to now—when they're talking about some new-fangled idea of TV telephones. And he never says a word.

By the way, I hear the old man's become one of these public figures lately—something to do with this new song, "Calijah, the poor old wooden head."

TAPESTRY

*All these are woven with my twisted thread
All of the faces that I meet,
All music heard, all voices sweet,
All of the passions I have known—
All love and joy and hate and pain—
All of the colors I may see . . .
All these are woven with my twisted thread
Into a glowing tapestry.*

—Carolyn Blakely

THE AWAKENED SOUL

*Lazy dreaming on a windy hill
of the world and the soul of man
When stroking the petals of springtime
flowers, yawning up at the morning sun,
Come thoughts of God, our heavenly maker,
and all the things he's done.
Enwrapped in visions of spiritual power,
my world transforms to a misty haven.*

*A cooling smile waits and then caresses
my lips,
For with bundles of flowers 'neath willow trees
into me Springtime tips.
On moss soled shoes she quietly dances in veils
of tranquil hue.
A gentle fragrance spreads as sun rays dandelions
imbue.
With one soft sweep the sulkened earth awakens with
drowsy eyes.*

*As I dream, I pluck from mother earth a dried and
withered rose . . . holding in my clutching palm
a symbol of the soul of man.
If only man would stop for once from worldly city life,
And turn his glance to far beyond so he could see my hill,
His soul would then transform itself to a blooming daffodil.*

Doris Chitwood

Reality Wavered

By GAYLE ATTAWAY

I heard music—a mystic hymn sung in a high-pitched voiced. The eerie rhythm made me turn and stare at the Negro woman. Was she singing or talking to herself? She chanted shrilly from the book held in her open palms, the words indistinguishable, her feet shuffling in rhythm.

Her wrinkled face was care-worn, gaunt, but strong. Heedless of curious stares, this tall, thin woman saw nothing as she walked down the bustling street.

Her feet were wrapped in newspapers, tied with triangles of blue cloth, the same blue material tied over her head. Her white, shapeless dress hung to her ankles, the hem-line uneven. A dress that I knew had been through many hand washings and ironings; a dress ironed with a flat iron, heated at an open hearth.

She didn't appear to belong to this earth, for she neither walked nor floated. Her feet made crackling, scuffling noises.

Was she insensate or was her faith and religion so strong that she neither feared nor felt shame nor embarrassment?

The beat of her song flashed primitive Africa across my thoughts—the closest I'll ever come to seeing it. How could she bring into sight so vividly the vision and feel of the tangled jungles, straw roofed villages, formations of glistening black Negroes, chanting in thin, high voices hymns and praises to their mystic gods.

The crowded Macon street seemed more unreal than the village scene. I was torn between them. I couldn't place myself in the steaming unknown—yet, I couldn't draw back so quickly to the known, familiar Cherry Street.

Where am I—and why?

What happened? She's only a poor mixed-up, religious fanatic. Other people are looking at her curiously too. I wonder what they think?

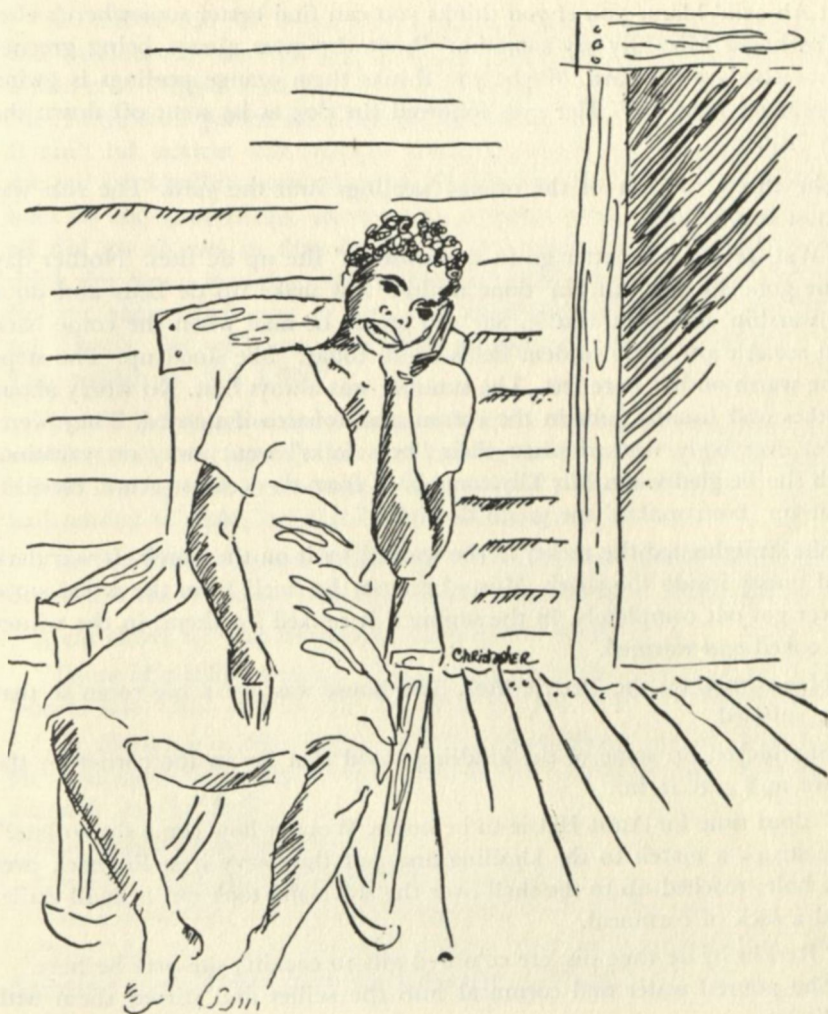
Did they see what I saw?

Did they?

LONGING

*A poet with word-music touched a thing
Inside me, and it trembled in reply.
But to the poet I gave back no music—
The quivering loosed not words, but only tears.*

Jan Gay



Home Come and From Where?

By SYD WILLIS

Mae sat on the top step and threw the orange peelings into the dirt yard. An old hound swaggled up and sniffed at them; turned up his nose and went off to better hunting.

"Folks lak you an' me, houn, cain't be so 'ticular 'bout what dey eats.

But Ah cain' blame you ef you thinks you can find better somewhere's else. Ah'se heerd Miz Elly say somethin' 'bout the grass always being greener in somebody else's yard. Maybe you thinks them orange peelings is gwina be oranger next do'." Her eyes followed the dog as he went off down the clay hill.

She threw the last of the orange peelings into the yard. The sun was almost down now.

"Wal, reckon Ah better go in de house an' lite up de lites. 'Nother day done gone by and Ah ain' done nothin' but make up de beds and do a lil' warshin' for Aunt Hattie. She sho gwina be mad when she come back and see Ah ain' gone to dem fields again today." She stood up. The steps were warm on her bare feet. The summer was always best. No worry about clothes and usually jobs in the cotton and tobacco if needed. They were. Most everybody worked when their "boss folks" went away on vacation. "Ah sho be glad when Miz Elly come back from de ocean so Aunt Hattie'll shut up 'bout makin' me go to de fields."

She straightened the rocker as she walked by it on the porch. It was dark and musty inside the shack. Musty because the smell from the wood stove never got out completely. In the summer, it cooked for them; in the winter it cooked *and* warmed.

Mae turned on the "lectric lite". The house was just a big room so that one sufficed.

She picked up some of the kindling wood that lay in the corner by the stove and put it in.

"'Bout time for Aunt Hattie to be home. Wonder how come she so late?" She struck a match to the kindling and put the heavy iron lid back over the hole; reached up to the shelf over the stove and took out a small skillet and a sack of cornmeal.

"Reckin by de time dis 'ere co'nbred gits to cookin', she orta be here."

She poured water and cornmeal into the skillet and stirred them with a finger.

"Hattie sho do wo'k hard. Ah wish dey were some way fo' me to hep her out a lil' mo'—specially since dat no count Nigger she done married done lef' her." She put the corn bread on to cook. Then walked out to the porch and sat in the old rocker to wait for Hattie. It was cooler there with a light summer breeze and the sun gone except for the smallest bit of orange.

"Wal Ah reckon if Ah really had to he'p her, Ah could go to wo'kin' in de fields—ef Ah HAD to." The old rocker creaked.

"Dat sho 'nough is one thing dat Aunt Hattie doan' eben begin to understand—dat and de Lord meetin' business." Mae rocked faster. The old rocker didn't squeak then.

"Yas suh, she gwin 'sho' 'nough be mad—she gwina pure raise a fit when she come home tonite an' see dis am de third day Ah ain' gone." She slapped at a mosquito.

"Ah knows dat Ah ought to go on an' do dat wo'k. It's good money and we needs it—but Ah cain't—ah jes' plain cain't. Ah hates de smell of a hun'ered Nigger men and women a' wokin' and a' sweatin in de sun. An Hattie ain't got no need to tell me dat de fresh air he'p out. It don'. It ain't lak nothin' but crawlin' aroun' in de dirt out in fields and dat sun jes' lak kindlin' wood. Eben ef Ah puts on 40 years an' gits to be near bout 60 lak Aunt Hattie, money ain't a' gwina mean dat much to me. An all dat go on out in dem fields—all dat singin' an' carryin' on—you'd think dey was a havin' a Church Meetin' right dere. Naw, suh, I'se gwina fin' me some other way to he'p out an' make money. It's lak Ah done tol' Hattie, dat wo'k out dere done sa much to make her git ol' as 20 y'ars wo'kin fo' Miz Lilly."

Mae's thin face set with a determined frown. She was a young girl, but one couldn't tell how young: just by looking at her, you might say almost thirty. Living with her cousin, "Aunt Mattie", nearly 50 years her senior had tended to make her think and look older.

The first cricket started its lullaby. Mae walked to the edge of the porch. She could see a star or two, dim in the light black of early evening.

A car drove up and stopped in front of the shanty.

"There Miz Lilly bringing Hattie home. Dey musta been cleanin' today. 'Sho is late." She walked over to the steps and stood on the top one.

"Ah thanks you, Miz Lilly." Hattie was climbing out of the car, her fat arms laden with grocery sacks and a large something Mae couldn't distinguish in the light.

Mae called from the porch:

"Evenin', Miz Lilly. Warm weather, ain't it?"

Miss Lilly's voice was shrill coming from inside of the car.

"Yes, 'tis, Mae Bell (everybody called her that). How're you doing? Enjoying yourself with Miss Elly away at the beach?"

"Yassum, sho is."

Aunt Hattie slammed the car door.

"Night, Miz Lilly. See you in de mawning'."

The car scattered red dust and made a huge noise in the evening silence.

"Evenin', chile." Hattie smelled of fried chicken grease and Johnson's Floor Wax.

"Evenin', Aunt Hattie." The big object was some kind of material. Miss Lilly must have given it to Hattie. Found it when they were cleaning.

The two walked into the house. Mae went over to the stove and took the cornbread off. Hattie sat down on the side of the bed and took off her shoes.

"Miss Lilly done gib us some fri' chicken whut was lef' over from dinner today—and deys some collards on dere too effen you wants to git 'em out. Sho' be good wid dat skillet-bread." She leaned back against the bed post and closed her eyes.

"Lawdy, Ah sho is tired. Miz Lilly believe in cleanin' dat house. Ah notice dis one look awful clean, Honey. You mus' be near bout daid. All dat wo'k in de field today an' den you come home an' clean up de whole house. What time you got home from de fields, Mae Bell?" She opened her eyes and looked to see where Mae was.

Mae didn't answer. She began to rumple grocery sacks.

"Mae Bell, Ah's jes' sayin' it sho' do look nice in here. What time did you get home from de fields?"

Mae found the chicken at the bottom of one of the sacks and wrapped in oil paper and began to unwrap it. (The best thing to do am jes' to act lak Ah too busy to hear her. Den Ah won't have to hear her squawk de res' of de night.") She took the collards from the other sack and placed them in their cracked bowl Miz Lilly had lent, on the table.

"Mae Bell. Ah don' lak dis foolishness you is handin' out at all. Now you jes' put dat mess up and tell me how come you ain' gone to de fields another day. An' ah don' want none o' yo' lies neither." Hattie sat down on the side of the bed.

Mae spread the oil paper neatly around the chicken.

Aunt Hattie talked louder this time.

"Mae Bell, you answer me. Is you done gone another day and not gone to de fields—is you? Answer me!"

Mae looked down at the table.

"Yassum. Das whut Ah's done." She spoke quietly and reservedly. This had happened before and raising her voice would do no good.

"Mae Bell, quit dat messin' around' and look at me." Mae obeyed. "Ah is older dan you an' Ah knows whut is de best. Now you knows as good as Ah knows dat it wouldn't hurt you to go an' wo'k in dem fields. You knows dat money would sho' come in handy when de winter time done aroun again. Ah went, an' has gone—eben when Ah was too old to go. You de same as me. Ain' no diffrence 'cept some silly idees you got in dat haid about de dirt and de singing'."

Mae stood by the table and heard Aunt Hattie through one ear. It was the same as before a hundred times.

"Aunt Hattie, how many times Ah got to tell you dat Ah ain't lak you is. We ain't alak fo' some reason dat Ah caint say eben, an' Ah is de one whut's diffrent. All Ah knows is whut Ah done tell you a million time. An' dat is how Ah hate de sweat and de singin' and all de . . ."

"Shut up. Ah jes' ain't gwina sit h'yar an' lissen to all dat silly mess again. You is jes' got some ob de craziest things in yo' haid. You is diffrent from mos; Ah reckons you's right about dat. Somethin' *mus'* be wrong wif you. You won't go to de meetin'; won't go to de dances, lessen you jes' has to cause de gals fusses at you. Ah don' know how come Ah has put up wif you as long as Ah has. Sometimes Ah think Ah shoulda gib you back to dat man whut brung you here."

Mae went over and sat down on the bed with Hattie.

"A'right, Aunt Hattie. Ah won' say dat no mo—all dat stuff about why Ah don' wanna go. Maybe you is right. Maybe it am crazy. But Ah ain't goin'. Dey somethin' happen to me when Ah go—somethin' Ah don' lak. Ah don' know how come it is no better dan you do. An' das whut bothers me so much.

"Aunt Hattie, you jes' say dat about a man bringin' me to lib wid you. Who dat man?" She had led into gradually.

Hattie got up and went over to the stove. Her face was set. She had said her piece and that was all. She had always been so mysterious about Mae's "Ma an' Pa." "Ain' no need to get mad at her. She through, lak al'ays now."

"Mae Bell, dey a table cloth dat Miz Lilly done foun' when we was cleanin' house dat she don' want no mo'. It's real pretty lak. How come we don' use it and make it seem lak a party. We ain' nebber had no table clof; won't seek lak we in our own house. It in dat chair by de do'. " She nodded her head in the direction of the chair.

Mae got the cloth from the chair and unfolded it. It was large, and white from many cloroxings. Several spots of iron rust proved its age and use.

Mae felt the softness of the material.

Suddenly from out of the nowhere of the past, the odor of clean swept floors and the picture of a white table cloth. The picture was blurred, but the idea it brought was clear—very clear—and Mae smiled to herself. "Ah's gotta know who ah is—some day—someday soon."

"Honey, effen you don't let go dat table clof, you gwina sho' 'nough tear it up. It ain' no new one, you know." She took the cloth from Mae and put it on the little table, stood back: "Look real nice on the table, don't it, Mae Bell?"

Mae didn't look.

Hattie put the skillet of cornbread on the table. Unwrapped the cold fried chicken and sat down to eat.

"Weren't my duty to worry 'bout how come you was here for me to take care of, Mae Bell. But now dat you is here an' has been here fo' a long time, it still my duty to see dat you gits fed lak always. Now you quit dat standin' in de flo' and come ober h'yar and eat some o' dis h'yar foods." She took a big bite out of a chicken back and pushed collards onto a piece of cornbread.

Mae sat down across from her.

"Eben ef Ah do say so, Ah done taught you to be a rite good skillet-bread cooker." Hattie took another bite of collards and bread.

* * *

That night Hattie and Mae sat out on the porch. Mae asked no more

questions. "Wouldn't do no good. She ain't gonna tell me nothin' now—but . . ."

Folks dropped in on them and they all discussed the Big Meetin' that was to be in "jes' two months." Mae kept to herself and just listened to Aunt Hattie telling "how important it is fer a soul to hab religion." That was something else Mae was different about. She didn't understand at all. Even less than about the fields.

"Wal, honey, lessen you has got de Lawd in you, you is a' gwina burn in Hell. An' you is one youngun dat ain't got de Lawd in you. No one has whut won't go to de Big Meetin' and confess o' dey sins afore de community." She had told her that last year and the year before. She didn't want to go through it all again. So now she just sat and listened and thought.

After all the visitors had gone home, and Aunt Hattie had talked herself hoarse and gone to bed, Mae stayed up and sat in the old rocker on the porch. She rocked fast so the squeaking would not keep Hattie awake.

"Efen it takes everything Ah got, Ah is gwina fin' out who is my Ma an' Pa. Dey gotta be a answer about how come Ah don' lak to do Nigger's doin's. Atter all, Ah is one ob 'em." She pulled a leaf from a bush at the side of the house and chewed on it.

"Ah wonders ef all dis idee is diffunt from dese other gals. Ah wouldn't neber tell dem how Ah feels about all dis 'ere stuff. So Ah reckons dey wouldn't neber tell me either. Ah wonders eff Issibelle ever thinks 'bout where she come from or who her Ma an' Pa really is. Reckon Ah won't neber know—reckin Ah won't neber know ef dey don't lak to wo'k in de fields an' all neither. But dey does it an' dats how come Ah is diffunt—cause Ah don'. Dey somethin' inside me keep sayin' find out who you is—fin' out who you is—but ah says "How?" Dem gals don't seem to hab too much trouble doin' much of anything what they does." The leaf was bitter.

An old car, equipped with the latest in coon tails and rubber mudguards and the added attraction of fuscias tail lights went past the house slowly. Mae watched it.

"Looks lak Jessie's car." She strained her neck to see it. The car came to a halt a few feet away; backed past the house and flashed the lights onto the porch. They blinded Mae.

"I'se gwina slap dat Nigger's face effen it's Jessie."

"Hey, Mae Bell. Let's have a pa'ty! Whut' cha doin' up ther on dat po'ch? Got'cha a man hid 'hin' the bush?" It was Jessie's voice. Loud and laughing.

Mae jumped off the porch and ran out to the car.

"Shush up, you fool man. You wanna wake up Aunt Hattie an' have her atter you wid dat shotgun she keep un'er the bed?" She pushed her hair back primly with her hand and held onto the side of the door.

"Git in here, gal. Sho is glad Ah seen you. 'Leben 'clocks de bes' time

fo' a party, ain't it, Doc?" He turned to someone by him who Mae couldn't see in the dark. She could see a white shirt though—just the starched cuff of a white shirt.

"Who dat you talkin' to Jessie?" She asked the question softly. Jessie grinned broadly.

"Huh! Thought you'd ast me that, Honey. Poke yo' haid in h'yar and Ah'll tell you."

Mae stuck her head in just half way. Jessie was such a cut up, he'd probably cut off all her hair.

"This here am Mr. Charlie Brown, Mae Bell. He hails from Noo Yo'k City, chile, so you bes' git onto yo' manners." He was proud of Charlie.

Mr. Charlie Brown put out his hand to shake introductions with Mae. She took it hesitantly. It was a big hand—soft—and the fingers were long and cool. And when she let go, her own hand smelled sweet and clean.

"Wal, Mae Bell, come on an' le's hab us a pa'ty. Charlie can show you a big time." There was Jessie again . . .

"Aw, Jessie, you know Ah ourtn't. Aunt Hattie'll sho' nough kill me when she find out Ah is gone out dis time o' nite." She smiled though.

Mr. Charlie Brown got out and opened the door.

"Come one, Mae. We'll have a big party—jes' you and me." He smiled back at her. His hand was big and clean on the door handle, and the shirt was white and starched.

* * *

Aunt Hattie had not been asleep. The car left red July dust on the weeds and Aunt Hattie left the window of the shack.

* * *

Miz Elly came back from the beach in late September. The children were all as brown as Mae herself. The sun rose and set and things went on as usual until it was the day of the Big Meeting.

The night before the meetin' Mae lay awake a long time thinking about it.

"Whut Ah has done made me whut Ah didn't want to be no how. Ah's common an' dirty. Ah's—ah's jes' no good no mo'!" The flower bag sheet under her was hot and sweaty. Mae's hand clutched at it.

"How come me not to hab better sense dan to think dat Nigger diffrent from de res'—how come? Ah jes ain' no good no mo'." She never cried, but now she did. This had happened and she couldn't stop it as she had stopped working in the fields. Aunt Hattie moved restlessly in her sleep.

The next morning, Hattie was up before sun-up.

"Mae Bell. Git yo' se'f up—effen yo' able atter las' night. Ah nebber heerd so much snifflin' in all my life." She stood over Mae. "You done kept me awake all night—now git up. You is a goin' to dat meetin' dis time an' effen Ah has to drag you dere and stan' you up, you is gonna go an' tell Gawd what's ailin' you—an' dat you is a sinner. Now git up!"

Mae pulled herself up in bed and stared at Hattie.

"What you talkin' 'bout—me goin' to de meetin' and' confessin' my sin? What sin you talkin' 'bout Aunt Hattie?" Her eyes were swollen and red. They stung.

Hattie stood with her hands on her hips. That meant business.

"You quit dat lyin'. You knows what Ah's talkin' about good as As do, an you kin believe me, Mae Bell Cook, the Lawd knows it too, an' lessen you goes an' fesses up, you is gwina go straight to Hell. He takes young and old. Git up, Mae Bell and git yo' clothes on. You is a goin'!"

Mae pushed back the pillow and threw her feet over the bed. She was dizzy. (Dis jes' some scheme o' hers to git me to go. She couldn't know 'bout that night. Et was atter she done gone to bed—an' how come she ain' say somethin' to me 'fore now—atter all dis time?)

"Mae Bell, you done sinned and Ah know it. Ah know it's true. Ah seen you when you got in de car dat night. Ah weren't asleep. Ah ain't say nothin' cause Ah weren't sure dey was anything else to it, but when Ah heerd you cryin' last night what Ah thought were true—ah knowed it were." She was still standing by the bed, her hands on her hips. Mae knew she really knew.

That Mae herself knew, and knew too that what she had done had destroyed all she had lived and believed against, that was bad enough. She couldn't stand Aunt Hattie knowing. She knew she would know sooner or later, but not like this. Besides she would have to go to the meeting and that was further destroying all she believed in.

"Ah is jes' common now. Ah is—ah is no good. But Ah won't let her know Ah think it. Ah won't go to the Meetin' an' tell everybody else. Ah won't."

"Mae Bell, quit your jes' sittin' there stare-eyes. Git up. You is done sinned against Gawd—an' what's wo'se, you has sinned against yo'self. Git yo'se'f up an' into yo' good dress. You is gwina go an' tell de Gawd above whut it is you done. He ain't got time to be foolin' roun' wid you' trifles, but you is gwina see effen you can make him try—you hears me, gal?"

"Ah ain't goin' Aunt Hattie. Ah is old 'nough to make up my own min' an' Ah ain't goin'! No! Ah ain't." She stood up and faced Aunt Hattie.

"Yes you is goin', Mae Bell!" Hattie's voice shook, but she wasn't screaming or loud. She just meant business. "Ah has brung you up an' de Good Book say dat you has to obey yo' Ma an' Pa. Ah is de same as yo's. It is my duty to de Lawd to see dat you gits dere—an' youse gwina git dere effen Ah has to whoop you here and now. You hears me, now, I reckon." She walked over to the door and took Mae's dress from it—gave it to her.

"Put dat dress on yo' se'f."

Mae held it for a minute. Just looking at it. Slowly she began to unbutton it.

Hattie sat down in the chair. She patted her foot impatiently and looked silly with her hat lop-sided on her head.

They walked down the road with all the singing and laughing Negroes. The sun was hot and Mae could feel it on the back of her silk dress—the

one Miz Elly had given her last summer for staying and helping so many nights.

The building was old and big. The walls and floors sagged with age, with the pulsating rhythm of the singing and patting feet, the whole thing shook. Mae and Hattie sat down in one of the farthest corners beside an old man. He was leaning over the seat in front of him.

"Oh, Lawd, Lawd. Ah knows dou am hy'yar in dis Meetin' House. Forgib dis old Nigger he sins. He ain' mean no harm. He jes' a old Negger, Lawd."

Mae sat rigidly in her chair; her foot unconsciously tapping the time on the floor.

It was hot. Aunt Hattie's Sunday-go-to-meeting dress was wet already and the white powder she wore for special occasions was in little balls around the wrinkles in her face and neck. She was bent over now and Mae heard her low, chanting prayer—indistinguishable above the others. Mae stared straight ahead of her. Over the bent bodies and kneeling figures, she could see the preacher, but the words he was saying were also inaudible over the mumbling and the singing, and the patting feet.

The singing grew softer as the mumbling rose to a higher pitch. Two of the older women were up in front now and they stood with their arms raised above their heads, their bodies swaying. They prayed in a sing song voice, loud and unmeaning words. More and more kept making their way to the front until it seemed to Mae they were nothing but one huge swinging black body.

Aunt Hattie stood up. She swayed to and fro in front of Mae, but every once in a while she would glance back to see if Mae was there.

"You better pray to the Lawd, chile; you better pray." . . . "Praise de Lawd, praise de Lawd."

The preacher talked on. The volume grew with each phrase. His words came fast and he gasped for breath between sentences.

The heat was awful. Mae began to sway in her chair and to chant the rhythm of the songs. It was a strange rhythm—almost syncopated—and no melody. It grew louder and louder until it seemed the room could not hold it and that it would burst through the roof.

Aunt Hattie grabbed Mae by the arm.

"Whut's wrong wid you chile? Ain't you got nothin' of de Lawd in you—nothin'? Ah say you was a gwina confess—now you gwina confess. Gowan an' confess."

Mae just sat swaying in her chair. Listening. She stared at Hattie and Hattie let go of her arm and went back to her "praising".

The chanting grew louder and louder. Suddenly Mae was on her feet, singing and chanting and swaying with the rest.

"Praise Gawd! Praise Gawd!" The voice was loud and familiar. It was her own—and here she was—here in this place she hated—here with the dirt and sweat and the singin'—jes' lak in de fields. Mae caught hold of the chair and sat down. Her whole body was tense and wet, but she was safe. She had saved herself so far.

Hattie was down in the front with the other women now and Mae saw her; heard her voice above the others. Heard her say her name.

The old man next to Mae was on his feet. He was chanting a rhythm of his own and soon a whole section had picked it up. The rhythms were mixed and the melody was mixed and the words were mixed. All the faces were one—all the bodies were one kneeling black body—and it was hot. Her feet beat the rhythm; her mouth said the words; her body did the swaying.

And then Hattie's arms were around her and she was standing in the blinding heat of the noonday sun.

"Praise de Lawd—praise de Lawd. My chile done confessed. She is done saved. Chile, Ah knowed you had de Lawd in you somewhere an' you has done confessed. You is saved. Ain't you happy? Ain't you happy, Mae? De Lawd done saved you. You has done confessed o' yo' sin as good as ebber heerd anybody and de Lawd done answer my prayin'. He done saved you Praise He name!"

Mae could wring the sweat from her silk dress. Her mind remembered nothing but a continual chant and her throat was sore. Aunt Hattie's arms around her neck were hot. She pulled them away.

Back at the house, they sat on the porch and drank the cool butter milk.

Hattie sat in the rocker. She was smiling and looked continually at Mae. Mae said nothing. She held her fingers around the cool jelly-jar glass.

"Praise de Lawd, Mae. Ah knowed it. Ah jes' knowed you'd git de spirit 'fore de meetin' end dis mawnin'." She rocked and rocked and smiled.

Mae could not believe she had done it. She had made herself a part of all she hated. She had sung and sweated with them all. She stared unbelievably at Aunt Hattie every time she praised.

(Ah is really one. Ah has done all dis. Ah is makin' myse'f more an' more into all dis sweat an' singin' an' mess. . .)

"Aunt Hattie, where Ah come from 'fore Ah come to live wid you?" It was an uncontrollable impulse; she didn't know what made her say it. It was almost like the confession.

"Why, chile, you do ast dat question at de strangest times. An' you is al'ays astin' it. How come you ast me dat now, honey?" She was not angry or indifferent as she had been the millions of other times Mae had asked her thought.

"Ah don' know how come, Aunt Hattie. Ah don' know, Ah jes' wonders where Ah come from. Don' you got no idee at all?" She scratched a line in the wood of the step with her nail. Maybe just knowing where would give some peace—some reason for why she still was "different."

"Honey, ain' Ah done tol' you time and time dat all Ah knows is what dat man tell me. Dat is reely all dat Ah know?"

"Aunt Hattie, yeah. But you ain't nebber tol' me what it were dat de man tol' you. You jes say dat all you know." She got up and walked to the door of the cabin.

"Why, 'pon my soul, Ah guess Ah ain't, has Ah. Well, you was al'ays sech a funny lil' gal, Ah was afeared dat ef you knowed wher you'd lived, you

might git one of yo' 'culiar idees and go." Aunt Hattie laughed and smiled up at Mae.

Mae did not smile.

"You knows den, where Ah b'longs to live an' you ain' nebber tol' me?"

"Wal, Ah reckins you is old 'nough now and seein' as you is done been saved . . . praise de Lawd . . . Ah reckon it won't hurt you none to know." She stopped rocking and looked at Mae. She was still smiling.

"Honey, all Ah know is dat yo' Ma an' Pa is daid. Ah tol' you dat 'fore. An' dat you and dey libed in a town name o' New O'leans. Dat am all Ah know. Ah ain' say nothin' else—dat am all—'cept praise de Lawd you is saved—you is done sabe yo'se'f from de Debil." She stood up. "Now come on an le's us git ourse'fs 'freshened up' 'fore time for the meetin' tonight."

Mae followed her in the house. Watched her as she put on some more of the white powder.

"Mae, git yo'se'f ready. Look at 'cha, jes' settin' there. We'll be late."

"Aunt Hattie, Ah don' feel so good. It'll be awright effen Ah don' go back tonight, won't it? De Lawd'll not hold it agin me effen Ah'se sick. Ah kin pray better right by myse'f at fust, Ah thinks. Let me stay dis time."

"Wallll, wal, effen you're really sick, an' effen yo' gwina pray—alright." She was at the door. "But, min', you, chile, you had better pray!" She walked out into the evening.

Mae walked to the door and watched her as she faded in with the others on their way to the Big Meetin'—second session.

Then Mae got the suitcase from under the bed. It was little and cardboard. It would do though. It would do if it could hold her two dresses and that was all she needed of this place—all she needed of "here" forever.

She found the white table cloth on the chair. It had a green spot on it from the last time they had used—but it was the white table cloth. Mae folded it carefully, put it on top of the dresses and shut the lid.

"Ah don' know where is New O'leans, but it's somewhere—somewhere's where Ah'm goin'."

Outside, it was cool and the sky was pink from the sunset.

THE MEETING

*We met upon the road,
But neither one could stay;
For you were travelling up the road
And I the other way.*

*We met and paused a while;
Yet all the time we stayed
I knew you journeyed up the road,
And could not be delayed.*

*We met, and paused, and kissed,
Then suddenly I knew
That pause was all we'd ever have
Between us two.*

Carolyn Blakely

SUN-BIRTH

*I'm sorry now I kissed that sun!
 I swallowed laughter:
 Swirls of burning bubbles spun
 Confusion after
 Fun.*

*Ah Heauen, dissolve me in your tears,
 Drown me! Drench me.
 Fever . . . thirst . . . This happiness sears!
 Let the quench be
 Tears.*

*I'm too ecstatic! Soak me, rain.
 Splash me sober.
 Bullet river, rush! Don't wane.
 Overflow, Bar.
 Pain.
 Pain! I've swallowed the sun.*

Mary Neuman

EVEN YOU

*With-in . . . way with-in
 There lies a song for you.
 And I would sing your name . . .
 But soft . . .
 So soft . . .
 As though I held your hand in mine.
 And I would sing the words we never said
 And make a love song of them.
 But I will not sing my song aloud;
 Not even half aloud;
 Not even to my heart will I sing.
 It is my song.
 You are my song.
 And so I keep you;
 And you
 Way with-in.
 . . . Even you . . .
 Do not know. . .
 With-in. . .*

Syd Willis

A Part of the World

By PATSY ANN DAVIDSON

Sitting down cautiously, the old man avoided the thin spot in the couch's faded material through which rusty springs threatened to escape. As his humped form automatically sought its usual position between the stiff back and padded arm of the couch, the old man looked almost unseeingly at the familiar sights—the long, wooden porch, the weather beaten rockers, the drying grass, and the crumbling, wooden sign reading, "The Peaceful Dale Rest Home".

Peaceful seemed to be an ironical term, for no sooner had the old man lazily succumbed to the warm air and fallen asleep, than he was rudely awakened by the heavy thumps of a cane, the rhythmic squeaks of a rocker, and the sharp discord of minor chords. With the first sign of spring, the old people had left their books, stamp collections, and knitting and now were swarming over the porch and grounds. They added the sound of their awakening to that of spring—the soft buzzing of the bees, the hushed rustling of the leaves, the shrill notes of the birds, the swish of waves on the lake.

The old man blinked his eyes, waved and smiled. He was glad that his friends had left their silent dreams, their individual occupations, their dreary memories and had come to life. It was as if they brought the world—all its glitter, sorrow, laughter, joys, and miseries—to him. Through the organdy curtains he could see the concert pianist playing as if the old upright with the missing keys was one of the grand pianos on which she used to perform. At the sound of a cane upon the wooden planks of the porch, he turned to see the former politician approaching. Not wishing to write his senator to discuss the depression, the old man quickly closed his eyes and feigned sleep until the talkative gentleman was busily engaged in conversation. His pretense was interrupted by a plea from the conscientious housewife to lift his feet and make room for the broom. Flittering around the porch was the last remnant of the flapper age. Dressed in all the glitter of the age, she did a modified Charleston step as she greeted everyone. As soon as this little lady had tripped gaily down the stairs into the garden, the actress, with perfect timing, made her entrance. She paused a moment at the door and glanced quickly over the group—the lawyer, holding a giant book in his hands; the artist, gazing up at the shapeless clouds; the old lady, still speaking of the New York debutantes of many years ago; and the circus star, diligently counting calories points—and then deciding that the lake fitted her mood, she dramatically descended the stairs.

As the old man watched and listened, he saw the human reflection of

the nature he knew so well. His life had been spent with the mountain streams, the mysterious forests, the desolate beaches and the damp caverns. He had avoided the society which lived in skyscrapers and knew nature only through the cut flowers in their luxurious living rooms. As old age forced the man to seek shelter, he had dreaded the continuous contact with these enemies of nature.

But now as he watched them, he realized that they were nature. The old man saw in the quick step of the flapper, the brisk autumn breeze; in the stately appearance of the judge, a majestic snow-topped mountain; in the movement of the housewife, the steady beat of the summer sun; and in the temperament of the artist, the changing twists of a mountain stream.

And so as he sat on the couch, watching society's reflection of nature, the old man became a part of the world, the world of his own generation.

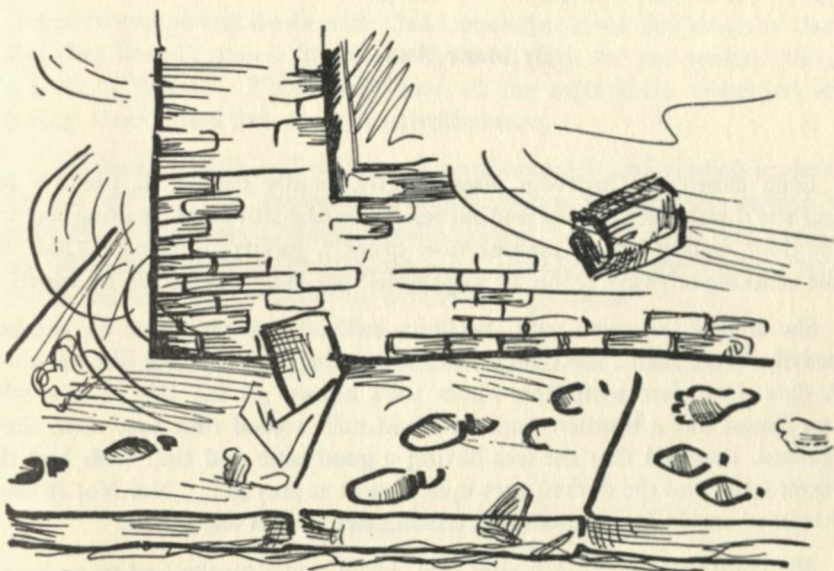
HOME

*A bowl of roses. . .
Funny papers scattered
on the multicolored rug
tripped over . . .
Coffee cups . . .
A plate of cookies . . .
An oak fire roaring.*

*A bowl of fruit . . .
Hands held
'round the table
in blessing . . .
Old silver . . .
And china . . .
Candles glowing*

*A bowl of fern . . .
Kids swinging
on the front porch
in summer . . .
Bright faces . . .
Warm hearts . . .
Love.*

Betty Wade



SOULS OF FEET

*A crazy beat belongs in the souls of pounding feet . . .
Trampling pigeon city dust into gum and gray sidewalks,
Shuffling in a swing, swang swung of dance music bound bodies,
Treading a half foot catwalk with afraid eyes leading afraid
Souls of feet . . .
Striding across molehill mountains of city anthills,
Dragging in gutter water, cooled along with popsicle papers,
Marching in steady patriot sound lines across a nation.
A crazy beat unites in the sound of pounding feet.*

Alice Marlin

Always Remember

By MARY ANN COGGIN

Leila closed the bedroom door quietly, hardly daring to breathe for fear she'd wake her mother and father. Then she still stood leaning against the door, letting herself breathe now quickly, jerkily thinking. What *was* she thinking anyway? It was all so jumbled up. Why should she be upset?

She crossed the room with the lights still off and sat down on the bed heavily. Well, really, she thought to herself, she was behaving like an idiot! A date. One date with Rob whom she's known all her life. A boy who was almost like a brother. And she'd had such a good time too, until she'd realized. Realized that she *was* having a good time and that Rob had the nicest smile and the darkest grey eyes, almost as grey as . . . No! No! A voice screamed inside her, tightening, stifling her so that she ached.

She hadn't had much fun after that. She'd told Rob she had to go home. It was so late, she'd floundered, so . . . no real excuse. She didn't care—just to get away, to get home. That's all.

Leila buried her face against her hands and began to cry wearily. She *had* wanted to go tonight. It was so long since she'd gone out, all that time when she couldn't bear the thought of going anywhere, all that time when she couldn't bear the thought of going anywhere, much less with a date. Why? Why couldn't she forget?

Slowly she lifted her head and gazed accusingly across the shadowed room at a photograph propped against her vanity mirror. Scattered moonlight distorted the picture, but Leila knew every line of it by heart—the almost too thin face, the straight, short blond hair and the eyes, especially the eyes. That's why it had been so bad tonight. Funny that she'd never noticed the color of Rob's eyes until then. Why, they were just the tiniest shade lighter than David's.

No! Leila's whole body stiffened suddenly and she clinched her hands into taut, hard fists. That must stop! She couldn't go through the rest of her life dreading the times she might see a closely cropped blond head or a pair of grey eyes to remind her of David. She'd *force* herself to forget. Every, single thing.

Resolutely she rose to her feet and started toward the vanity table. First she'd destroy that picture. She'd . . . Leila stopped, a look of surprised realization coming into her eyes.

"Now, you *are* being ridiculous!" she said aloud. But she was no longer crying. She was too greatly stunned by this new thought. Why, all this time she'd been trying to do something that was impossible! She'd been trying to forget, to completely throw aside those memories, bitter and sweet, of David. But they weren't something she could throw away, for you couldn't discard a part of yourself. Those memories, all the experiences connected with loving David, had left their unerasable mark.

Leila looked again at David's smiling photograph and relaxed as though against her will. Oh, perhaps it wouldn't always be like this. Perhaps the remembering wouldn't always be quite so hard. And she might find someone else who could be more than a memory . . . someday. But she wouldn't forget David. As long as she lived she wouldn't forget David.

WATER STORY

*See the shimmer of a face,
A form, a wavering reflection—
Surface shadows fleck the image
Where it falls, upon the water.
Soft currents carry
Mar the vision, move the shape.
What we have seen is never certain.
This tangible, still unsure sight,
Show us reality, transposed.
Shaded yet contained, therein is
An under-lying pattern
For each apparent ripple of the present.
Each particle of past impression,
Has found its place
And dwells within the depths.
So as the ever changing image
Reposes, cradled, calm
The faint breath of my thoughts,
Escapes, and causes once again a quaver—
Above the face upon the water.*

Myra Highsmith

OUT OF LIMBO

*Where you come from I know not,
And ask not where you go.
It is enough for me to say
Out of limbo came you to me.*

*Perhaps from a wilderness lair you sprang
Suckled by a vixen,
Or fathoms beneath the sea's cold murk
You rose from your seal-man's home.*

*And maybe you will return again
To the legend-land of Pan;
Or yet return to Avalon,
A knight, to revel in joust.*

*But where you began and how you continue
I chance shall never know.
It is enough for me to say
Out of Limbo came you to me.*

*Out of the uterine depths of night,
Out of the velvet containing men's souls,
Out of immortal caverns of grief,
Out of celestial rivers of joy.*

*I will not question the gift I am lent,
Nor will I stay your freedom.
I will drain the wine at your lips
And know naught of the vineyard.*

*Sent by a hand that knew my need,
Bearing a golden cup of faith,
Anointed in spices of leaf and loam,
You came and sat by me.*

*Where you come from I know not
And ask not where you go.
It is enough for me to say
Out of limbo came you to me.*

Sharon M. Smith

LONELINESS

*Part of my past, leave me now!
 Go, thoughts that drink of tears!
 How to forget you? I know not how
 When loneliness appears.*

Loneliness

*thy grasping hands are oh so quick
 to hold those thoughts . . .*

*Sweet gay thoughts
 that drink of tears and dance
 behind a curtained mind and half closed lids
 Part of my past, leave me now!
 Go, thoughts that drink of tears!
 Leave a lonely heart and weary brow
 To think of future years.*

Mary Frances Axley

VALGOVIND

*Startling red wing
 Against bright blue sky
 Dead brown leaf
 Falling through smoky air
 Long black fingered branches
 Reaching up through falling white sky
 Then—always again
 Green dotted trees
 And balmy sweet smell everywhere.*

*And the voice of early Youth
 Cried out—"I am here!"
 And the sun smiled
 And the breeze came
 And the breeze blew
 And the clouds blew
 And green dotted trees
 Smelled sweet on the air
 As a voice whispered,
 "Here"
 "Here"
 "Here".
 Startling red wing
 And the voice of startled Youth
 Cried out—"Where am I going?"*

*And the moon rose
And the clouds rose
And the evening came
And the night came
And a bright red wing
Soared against a bright blue sky
As a voice whispered,
"Everywhere"
"Everywhere"
"Everywhere"*

*Dead brown leaf
Falling through smoky air
And the voice of despairing Youth
Cried out—"Where have I been?"
And the moon went down
And the light went down
And the night stayed
And the darkness stayed
And no voice answered.*

*Long black fingered branches
Reaching up through falling white sky
And the voice of lost Youth
Cried out—in pain.*

*And the darkness remained.
And the winds came
And the winds blew
And the rains blew
And the trees bowed
And the branches bowed
As a voice whispered,
"Nevermore"
"Nevermore"
"Nevermore".*

*And the winds went
And the moon rose
And the breeze came
And the trees stirred
And the voice of Youth
Was quiet.*

*And again the seasons came
And again the seasons went.
Then the voice of enlightened Youth
Cried out—"I am a part of all I have met."*

*And the green dotted trees
Smelled sweet on the air.
And a voice whispered,
"The years are passing.
Hold them fast.
For you are a part
Of all you have met
Of all you are meeting
Of all you will meet.
Evermore
Evermore
Evermore."*

Libby Glenn

SONNET

(Based on Sir Francis Bacon's statement that "It is impossible to love and to be wise.")

*It's true when someone loves he does not see
His loved one's faults—or seeing, does not care—
But I believe that none of us is free
To say of love, "I see no wisdom there."
For though a great man said "I love I find
Mere passion weak," I feel another part;
Underneath the wisdom of the mind,*

*There is a special wisdom of the heart.
It is the thing in each of us which tries
To share itself, no matter what the pain
Or what the cost—and if it fails, it dies—
For hearts through suffering learn to love again.
Though deep the hurt, the heart forever cries,
"Fear of love is deadly; Love is wise!"*

Jan Gay

I SEE

I AM SEEN

A tear, a laugh . . .

A roommate's frown . . .

Do not draw back or shrink away. You have no secrets from me.

Faults and scars, pink and tan, white and black skin. . .

Virtues and halos

Drift to and fro . . .

A half open door

A closed, locked window.

Sunlight

Shadows

Do not draw back or shrink away. You have no secrets from me.

A fuzzy light blue teddy bear . . . minute

The king, jack, ten of a bridge hand standing at attention before me.

Dust

Dirst

Filthy rain boots . . . slimy black

Clean white virgin sheets

Do not back or shrink away. You have no secrets from me

A dead orchid, clinging to the faded string of a ribbon

A tear-soaked Kleenex . . . soggy

A piece of blue stationery . . . crumpled

A laughing boy-face turned toward a blank wall

Do not draw back or shrink away. You have no secrets from me.

A Bible

A magazine

A notebook

A typewriter

A tear, a laugh . . .

A roommate's frown . . .

I could catch and hold . . .

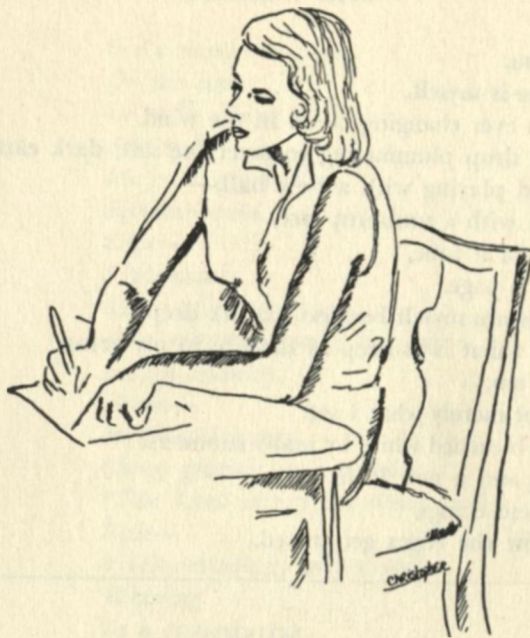
Momentarily

Eternally

Your life

I am a mirror.

Anne McMaster



A Memorandum

By JEAN THRASHER

She turned the newly written letter over and pressed it to the blotter. It was something she had done a thousand times before, but she had never noticed how the ink frayed out in rough edges. Now everything was inverted. Strange . . . another language, a cryptic, meaningless language. Yet it's there on the blotter—permanent, indelible.

A blotter is an odd thing anyway. It is just wood pulp with a dash of color in the mixture, but it seems almost alive. It sucks in moisture thirstily. It sucks deep into itself until the ink blots are no longer mere impressions. They are part of the substance of the blotter.

She folded the letter and sealed the envelope. Outside the window—green leaves that caught the sun like prisms, a passing automobile rushing out into unknown distance, a little boy in grimy duck pants riding a bicycle, a scene framed in a window pane.

She took out a sheet of paper and began to write a letter to herself—

a memorandum.

All that I see is myself.

I float as an ever changing cloud in the wind.

I am a rain drop plummeting to meet the soft, dark earth.

I am a child playing with a new ball.—

An old man with a sunburnt face,

A fragment of a tune,

A word on a page.

These things are myself because I drink deep—

Because my thirst is as deep as the life in my veins.

I see and I am.

Yet I am not merely what I see.

I am a rock bleached white by many summers.

I am water and a new leaf.

I am all these things,

But somehow the edges get frayed.

MUSIC

"What is music?"

I heard them say:

"Music—

Music is little black notes

On shiny white paper

Like pepper

Spilled on a new table-cloth.

It is the touch of cold metal

In the flutists's hands

And the squawking violins—

Cat-guts crying out

Against horses' tails:

The conductor

Waving his little stick

And lion's mane.

It is a big black piano—

Heavy wood

And ivory

With lid upraised

Like some ungainly vulture

Taking flight—

All black and white and cold."

* * *

I thought this over.

Music?

Yellow—

Like a warm fire

*On a winter evening;
Or the sun
In early spring.
And red—
Majestic, courageous,
Hot-tempered.
Silver—
Flute-notes
Sharp, piercing, sweet,
Like raindrops on a tin roof
In the country.
Green—
Mellow clarinets,
Sheep grazing in a pasture,
"The Lord is my Shepherd . . ."
Blue—
Violins wailing; or trumpets
Whining
In a room
Beneath the sidewalk.*

*And my heart said:
"No!
You are wrong."
I answered:
"Music is life!"*

Barbara Swartz

THE LISTENER

*Horses's hoofs rang out so clear
Into the moonlit night,
Down the road of dusty clay
Faster into flight.*

*Galloping faster mile and mile
Through eerie trees that howl,
Suddenly the night is pierced
By the hooting of an owl.*

*Shadows dance to and fro
All across the lawn,
Swaying, twisting, turning,
Dreading approaching dawn.*

*A sudden tap comes rapping,
Beating at my door,
I scream and bury my head,
Not daring to explore.*

*Suddenly no more hoof beats,
No more moonlight streams.
This horrid riding creature
Was only in my dreams.*

Mickey Haynie
